

Symposium and Training Conference Tackles Fraud and Abuse

No matter how deep your pockets are, \$7,863,000,000 is a lot of money. But at the end of FY 2006, that was the estimated total liability for future workers' compensation costs for the U.S. Postal Service – more than *seven billion dollars!* To examine ways to control the escalation of these costs, the Postal Service and the Office of Inspector General (OIG) united to hold the first National Injury Compensation Symposium and Training Conference, April 25-27, 2007, in Arlington, Virginia.

Over 200 Postal Service and OIG leaders and employees knowledgeable about postal health care and injury compensation attended the three-day conference. Representatives from the Department of Labor; postal labor unions and management associations; and the Department of Justice, also participated as speakers, panelists, and audience participants. The co-hosted conference was geared toward developing a greater understanding of the injury compensation and health care program and the impact that fraud has on the system.

Three key objectives guided the symposium's messaging. Attendees were encouraged to share executive-level knowledge of the injury compensation program in the Postal Service, discuss the program's design and the intended function, and to talk about the challenges facing the program and develop countermeasures and strategies to improve the current program.

Over the past ten years, health care costs have risen rapidly and fraud has kept pace. As the largest civilian workforce in the federal government, the Postal Service has not been exempt from these rising costs. Every day postal employees are exposed to situations that can cause on-the-job injuries. Most reported injuries are legitimate, however, a small percentage of employees and health care providers abuse the system. OIG Special Agents and Injury Compensation Specialists from the Postal Service work closely together to prosecute criminals abusing the system and prevent payment in fraudulent cases.

Deputy Postmaster General and Chief Operating Officer Patrick Donahoe delivered the keynote address, emphasizing the importance of communication and safety in a changing environment. He noted that the Postal Service is working harder than ever to ensure their employees are operating in a safe atmosphere. Donahoe thanked the OIG and Department of Labor for being great allies in the effort to improve safety and reduce fraud.

Inspector General David Williams encouraged employees to share knowledge and work together to develop strategies to prevent health care fraud and abuse. Williams noted that "last year alone our investigations into injury compensation fraud and provider fraud resulted in more than \$115 million in cost savings and avoidances." He announced new plans to help educate employees about the OIG and on the consequence of health care fraud.

Guest speaker Denise Wilson of Congressman Henry Waxman's office voiced her appreciation of the OIG and its importance in monitoring the health care program and investigating injury compensation fraud. She addressed the importance of a strong working relationship between the OIG and the congressional oversight committee.

Symposium co-host Jerry Lane, U.S. Postal Service Capital Metro Area Vice President, encouraged attendees to share ideas and best practices during the conference. David Patterson, Southeast Area Manager of Operations Support, who represented Area Vice President Terry Wilson, echoed Jerry Lane's message and emphasized the importance of working together on these issues.

Shelby Hallmark, Director of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP), Department of Labor, discussed the Department of Labor's role in the workers' compensation program and handling healthcare fraud investigations. He also highlighted the need for legislation to update current laws. Manager of Health and Resource Management, Ronald Henderson covered the National Reassessment Program currently implemented in target districts and shared stories of the programs success. The program refers injured-on-duty postal employees who can no longer perform their duties to OWCP for possible placement in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Tim Barry, Deputy Assistant Inspector General, Investigations and Gordon Milbourn, Assistant Inspector General, Audit discussed OIG strategies for uncovering fraudulent claims.

The second day began with National Medical Director Dr. David Reid from the U.S. Postal Service, who presented on employee health and shared perspectives on medical provider fraud. Dr. David Bachman, National Medical Administrator for the U.S. Postal Service explained his role and provided valuable information for case management and investigations.

A Union panel consisting of representatives from the American Postal Workers Union, National Rural Letter Carriers Association, and the National Postal Mail Handlers Union, and a second panel including the National Association of Postmasters of the United States, and National Association of Postal Supervisors discussed postal employees' perspective of the health care program. The Union representatives encouraged the Postal Service to focus on preventative measures to ensure that fewer accidents occur. They also emphasized the need for improved communication. All expressed reservations with the new National Reassessment Process, scheduled for national implementation over the next year.

Multiple training sessions took place with postal specialists, OIG auditors, and investigators to develop front-end controls to ensure employees return to duty quickly and safely.

During the final day of the conference, David Stelzer, National Healthcare Fraud Program Manager, led a training course that focused on claimant fraud. During the training, Stelzer introduced many innovative investigative techniques and provided several successful case examples. Paul Camilletti, Assistant United States Attorney, Northern District of West Virginia, was a guest speaker. Camilletti discussed his role as the Federal Prosecutor in United States vs. Brian Tribble, which was the OIG's first successful claimant fraud investigation.

The three day National Injury Compensation Symposium and Training Conference was a success! For the first time, OIG and postal employees were able to come together and share ideas for best practices. Conference attendees left the symposium with a greater knowledge and understanding of the Postal Service health care program and strategies to help prevent fraud and abuse.



Deputy Postmaster General and COO Patrick Donahoe delivered the symposiums keynote address on April 25 at the first National Injury Compensation Symposium.



Guest speaker Denise Wilson of Congressman Henry Waxman's office encouraged a strong working relationship between the USPS OIG and the congressional oversight committee.



Labor panelists (from left to right) Clifford Dailing of the National Rural Letter Carriers Association, Dick Collins of the National Postal Mail Handlers Union, and Corey Thompson of the American Postal Workers Union discussed postal employees' perspective of the health care program.